Jan Olofsson, Hans Gustafsson and David Brodin

Resource notes

Jan Olofsson, Hans Gustafsson and David Brodin are executive officers of Music, Video and Games at the National Library of Sweden.

An introduction to the music collection at the National Library of Sweden

The National Library of Sweden is the national repository for printed material but it also serves as the national archive for audiovisual content. This includes sound recordings, moving images, television and radio broadcasting and computer games.

The library has been collecting Swedish gramophone records since 1958. Initially, an agreement was signed with most of the major record companies to deposit commercially-released recordings on a voluntary basis. Since the record industry was relatively small at the time, it was possible to make retrospective acquisitions and collect almost all the recordings made and issued in Sweden in earlier years.

In 1978 the Statutory Deposit Act was passed in parliament. It stated that the law of legal deposit copies to the National Library, which has been in force in Sweden since 1661, would be extended to audio and video recordings. The 1978 Act stated that any record company that released a recording in Sweden in a run of more than 50 copies was to provide one copy of the recording to the national collection. The act also stated that a new institution, governed by the state, should be established under the name the National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images which was to include the music collection of the National Library. This was the first research archive to gather all these different media under one roof. However, in 2009 the National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images ceased to be an independent institution and was merged into the National Library as a special Film, Music and Games section including radio and television.

Today, the archive amounts to a total of eight million recorded hours, all media types included. The Swedish Media Database, the National Library’s database for audiovisual material, lists around 25,500 LPs, 29,000 45s or EPs and 66,500 CDs...
of all genres (from popular to classical music). The 78 collection consists of more than 100,000 records (the oldest dating back to 1895). Of these at least 55,400 records are indexed and searchable in the database.

Two large 78 donations from local collectors are of special interest: the Olof Liljeson collection and the Sölve Ericsson collection. The Liljeson collection contains 5,730 records. Liljeson was something of an early pioneer of home recording who made lots of home-made transcription discs and acetates of speeches, parties and friends playing instruments or singing. Sölve Eriksson, whose collection numbers around 50,000 records, collected most of his records after the 78 era, from the 1950s to the 1990s. Since the library’s primary purpose is to collect and archive material that has been produced in Sweden, by Swedes, or in some way relates to Swedish matters, only the material that meets these conditions has been indexed.

In common with many other national libraries, the advent of the digital age has brought about new challenges and the need to institute new methodologies and working practices. Due to limitations in current legislation, the archive fell behind with the acquisition of digital-only releases. Some digital music has been purchased to make up for this, but large gaps are still evident. However, since 1 January 2015, a new legal deposit law of electronic documents has been in force, including all commercially and professionally made digital music in Sweden. Tests have been made to set up large-scale delivery of born-digital music through music aggregators and although this project is still very much in its early stages it is hoped to lead to a more comprehensive and representative collection of digital music recordings. Additionally, an ongoing project of digitization of the CD collection is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015.

Due to copyright restrictions most of the material is not available to the general public, access being only available to researchers. Researchers can register and apply for an account and when the application is approved full access to the collections is available. There are a few basic criteria to qualify as a researcher which are: writing a university-level paper or thesis, being a published author or journalist, or undertaking research for artistic activities.

The Swedish Media Database is available online (at smdb.kb.se) in its entirety. Artists, composers, titles and all kinds of records and recordings can be searched without restrictions. Material from the database can be ordered online, but is only available for listening and viewing at the National Library in Stockholm, or as an interlibrary loan at one of the libraries and universities in Sweden, Norway and Denmark with which the library cooperates. Material that is not already available on file (for instance 78s and vinyl) will be digitized on demand when ordered. Ordering material is free. It is not yet possible to access material online at libraries outside of the National Library, but the intention is that it will be the case in the future.

© Equinox Publishing Ltd 2015.